

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

SEA BASING: EVOLUTIONARY NAVAL DOCTRINE AND MILITARY TRANSFORMATION

by

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ABSTRACT

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The early 90s began one of the most fruitful periods in the history of concept development for the U.S. Marine Corps and U.S. Navy. The naval services refocused their development efforts with the publishing of the pivotal "...From the Sea" which has lead to the transformational concept of Sea Basing. Sea Basing is one of the tenants of the Navy's Sea Power 21 and a cornerstone of the Marine Corps Operational Maneuver from the Sea and Expeditionary Maneuver Warfare concept.

Sea Basing through a combination of naval platforms provides the bridge for the American military forces between the advance force operations needed to prepare the battlespace and the war-winning or campaigning forces needed for sustained combat. Sea Basing, through a combination of technologies, will maintain afloat more command and control, fire support and logistics than every before, thus increasing the maneuver force's flexibility and speed of action. Sea Basing provides the nation with unencumbered access to the littoral regions of the world and a higher level of force protection than has been afforded American military units in the past. The Enhanced Networked Seabase (ENSEabasing) allows the American military the opportunity to self-synchronize the operations of the force while it masses off the coast. The inherent flexibility provided by ENSeabasing allows the embarked force to be used for humanitarian efforts or to conduct rapid operations before adversary antiaccess capabilities are engaged.

To fully understand the transformational nature of the ENSeabasing concept and the capabilities that it will bring to the nations military, it is important to understand the origins of the concept for both the maritime services. Additionally, it is illustrative to see after twelve years of development how the concept so effectively satisfies the requirements set out in the Quadrennial Defense Review and other transformational planning documents. The development of Sea Basing has clearly been an evolutionary process, which has provided the nation one of the most significant transformational ideas of all Service concepts.

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SEA BASING: EVOLUTIONARY NAVAL DOCTRINE AND MILITARY TRANSFORMATION

WHY SEA BASING

The Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) both outlines the current security requirements for the nation and provides for the goals of transformation to meet the challenges of the future. The QDR states “The purpose of the U.S. Armed Forces is to protect and advance U.S. national interests and, if deterrence fails, to decisively defeat threats to those interests.”¹ Accordingly, the QDR requires the military to “increase the capability of its forward forces, thereby improving their deterrent effect.”² Sea Basing is one concept that supports this without being totally dependent on other nations for basing privileges. Additionally, “U.S. forces will fight from forward deterrent postures with immediately employable forces, including long-range precision strike capabilities ...and rapidly deployable maneuver capabilities.”³ These are precisely the capabilities the Navy and Marine Corps’ concept of Enhanced Networked Sea Basing will provide to the nation and Joint Force Commanders. The Secretary of Defense has stated that he wants “fundamentally joint, network-centric, distributed forces capable of rapid decision superiority and massed effects across the battlespace.”⁴

Perhaps inadvertently, the Secretary is generally describing the capabilities the Sea Basing concept promises. The Secretary asserts that the nation has a strategic imperative for transformation to meet the asymmetric threats of our potential adversaries. Sea Basing allows the United States to maximize our nation’s asymmetric advantages to ensure no future adversary will be able to threaten the nation’s security by denying us access. This Strategic Research Project (SRP) examines the evolutionary development of Sea Basing, perhaps the most transformation of all the Service concepts. A better understanding of the evolution of Sea Basing provides insight about the transformation process. Even with Sea Basing’s transformation capabilities, after twelve years of thought and development it still does not provide the nation everything desired for future operations. Yet, the potential of Sea Basing provides the future Joint Force one of its most powerful options for decisive victory.

WHAT IS SEA BASING?

To understand the concept of Sea Basing, we must first distinguish between Sea Basing and sea-based forces. Sea-based forces represent the historic root of the Sea Basing concept. Indeed, sea-based forces have been associated with military operations since the Vikings. These maritime people used their knowledge of navigation and seafaring skills to project their influence from northern Europe to the Americas. The Vikings raided the coast of modern-day

Ireland and England for the goods and resources needed to support their life style. The Viking's unprecedented mobility allowed them to move almost at will throughout much of the North Atlantic, both conducting raids and extending trade. The Vikings always maintained a link to the land, although their capability was primarily sea-based. Sea Basing, however, posits that a maximum amount of force capability will be left afloat rather than moved ashore. Ideal Sea Basing would allow forces to live at sea indefinitely, conducting all functions there that are normally done on land.

HISTORICAL EXAMPLE OF WORLD WAR II

The most significant advances in sea-based forces toward the concept of Sea Basing were demonstrated by U.S. naval campaigns in the Central Pacific during World War II. "This geography meant that the logistic support for our fleet during operations in the Central Pacific would have to be primarily afloat, in what developed into the mobile service squadron"⁵ concept. Admiral Nimitz's initial plan for the Central Pacific campaign was to use one mobile service squadron to support the fleet and, as advance bases were taken, to propel another mobile service squadron ahead, in effect leapfrogging the fleets' support from one advance base to the next.⁶ This was a visionary concept in and of itself; indeed many skeptics in the Navy doubted the capabilities of afloat service support, and the concept of underway refueling was still relatively new.⁷ Nonetheless, for the first time the world would see a nation project its power around the world on ships and aircraft. Few elements were missing from what would evolve into the modern concept of Sea Basing. "The advantages of logistics afloat and near the fleet operating area had long been recognized by many naval commanders. This support from advance bases and from floating mobile service squadrons and groups maintained the fleet and enabled it to take offensive action farther from home supply points than was ever before thought possible."⁸

At the start of World War II, the U.S. Navy's Base Force Train, which provided logistics support to the fleet, had a total of 51 craft to support the fleet; by the end of the war this number had grown to 315 vessels of all types and sizes.⁹ Assault forces would conduct landings under the cover of massive naval surface fire and air support. These assault forces would establish a beachhead in order to bring fire support, command and control, and logistic support ashore. Logistics in the Pacific was sustained by hundreds of noncombatant ships following just behind the fighting fleets and assault forces, provided by three mobile service squadrons: Six, Eight, and Ten. Squadron Eight brought the supplies from the United States and transferred them to Squadron Ten, which in turn transferred the food, fuel and ammo over to Squadron Six, which

followed immediately behind the fighting fleets.¹⁰ All supply transfers were done at sea, and maintenance was conducted from protected anchorages and floating dry docks by Mobil Squadron Ten. In the Central Pacific, as the amphibious forces secured new islands, supplies needed to prosecute the war were moved forward. As each island closer to Japan was secured, assault forces were taken to secure areas like Hawaii for reconstitution and the next assault. Since World War II, advances in technology have advanced the capabilities of sea-based forces to the point that today's maritime forces are capable of implementing the Sea Basing concept.

HOW SEA BASING COMPARES TO BEING SEA-BASED.

Sea Basing has thus become the next generation of amphibious warfare. It is illustrative to use the Pacific scenario for comparison to explain the concept. Sea Basing now allows maritime forces to bypass all but the most critical objectives to the campaign's success. Pacific islands secured during World War II to solely support the logistic tail would generally not be needed. Sea Basing means the logistic sustainment is inherent in the capability of the force. This allows assault forces to be husbanded so only those objectives that directly contribute to defeating an adversary need to be taken. Assault forces will still be supported by an umbrella of naval air and surface fires to support the assault, but the assault force will move directly from the sea-base to the objective. It will not have to stop or slow down to establish a beachhead in order to bring fire support and logistics ashore. The sea-based forces' networked command and control will remain afloat, allowing for real-time decision management, control, and self synchronization, without the need to be physically ashore to manage the battle. Once the assault force has taken its objective, it will then return to the sea-base for reconstitution, an effort that in the past had to be accomplished ashore and in locations distant from the area where the next assault would occur. Recalling the island-hopping Pacific operations of World War II, it is easy to comprehend the speed, power, and flexibility that the Sea Basing concept brings to the current military capability of the United States.

SEA BASING DEFINED

The Sea Basing concept, like any good concept, is continually evolving. In defining Sea Basing, it is easier to explain the characteristics and capability which it provides than to anticipate what Sea Basing is going to look like when its full operational potential has been reached. The Sea Basing concept also has different connotations depending on whom or what organization is describing it. Texts written about Sea Basing typically explain what it will provide

in terms of military capability as opposed to explaining the physical make-up of full function Sea Basing operations.

Sea Basing is one of the three legs of the U.S. Navy's Sea Power 21 Strategy. "Sea Basing serves as the foundation from which offensive and defensive fires are projected-making Sea Strike and Sea Shield realities."¹¹ It is also an integral part of the Marine Corps' Expeditionary Maneuver Warfare Concept. Sea Basing allows the United States to maximize our nation's asymmetric advantages in technology and conventional military might against or in support of a nation in crisis.¹² Sea Basing maximizes the inherent power of the freedom of the sea and the strength of the American Navy "by exploiting the largest maneuver area on the face of the earth: the sea."¹³ No other country in the world can approach the U.S. Navy's ability to control the open seas and project power into the littorals. Sea Basing builds on both of these ideas of naval power and freedom of the sea. Naval forces can operate almost at will, with little regard for the political dealings associated with basing and over-flight rights. This maritime freedom allows the U.S. to move the sea base in the international waters off the coast of a troubled country, to provide humanitarian assistance, to evacuate American personnel, to act as a flexible deterrent option (FDO), or to prepare for offensive operations. To envision what Sea Basing will be, think beyond a single ship or platform to a family of naval platforms¹⁴ that have been developed in such a way as to be able to work independently of each other or as part of the total Sea Base infrastructure. This family of platforms will be able to mass effects, to increase sensor coverage and force protection capabilities while projecting both offensive and defensive power.¹⁵ The Sea Base, with the capabilities associated with Sea Shield, with its mobility and its location off shore provide an inherent security that a fixed land-based site can never achieve.

Sea Basing places at sea to a greater extent than ever before these interrelated battlefield operating systems: logistics, command and control, fire support, and maneuver forces.¹⁶ The Sea Base "will leverage information to achieve efficiencies and provide support at the time and place of greatest impact...shifting to anticipatory responsive logistics"¹⁷ that are linked in command and control and in cargo handling technologies, so logistics can be performed afloat and on the move. Sea Basing is not just about logistics, but logistics is one of the key innovations and requirements of the concept. With Sea Basing's inherent logistics capability, any Service's force will be able to be sustained for long periods of time and great distances from the continental United States. The "web of connectivity turns individual ships into elements of a dispersed but integrated force,...from which the commander exercises control in secure and mobile facilities accelerating the speed,...and action at every level of

command.”¹⁸ Sea Basing, by keeping afloat the maximum amount of fire support possible, increases the speed at which maneuver forces can operate, and frees them of the requirement to maintain ashore security for these fire support assets.

ENHANCED NETWORKED SEA BASING

Enhanced Networked Sea Basing (ENSeabasing) is the next step in the evolution of the Sea Basing Concept: “An enhanced networked sea base will provide the transformational capabilities that expand the naval services’ abilities to preclude and counter the actions of increasingly creative, adaptive and lethal adversaries.”¹⁹ Sea Basing thereby contributes to the Joint Force Commander (JFC) in either static or dynamic operations. Static operations rely primarily on logistics, while dynamic operations rely on maneuver.²⁰ Enhanced Networked Sea Basing is defined as:

“The integrated capabilities resident in a family of systems and assets afloat that maximize the projection of all dimensional naval power both at sea and ashore. It is a quantum leap forward in naval power projection capabilities through phased at sea arrival and assembly, selective offload, and reconstitution at sea using netted dispersed forces, enabled by FORCEnet, which facilitates joint operations across the range of military operations.”²¹

ENSeabasing, in simple terms, will allow for: phased at sea arrival and assembly, selective offload, integrated power projection, persistence and sustainment, fully networked command and control, and reconstitution at sea. These combined capabilities are no small order. They place great demand on both the technology needed to support the concept as well as the commander and staff’s ability to imagine how this will all work together as part of the total sea base. First, consider what phased at-sea arrival brings to the force. Currently, forces require long lead times as they prepare to deploy. Then once deployed, they must assemble in the theater of operation. Deployment of forces may depend on a host nation’s willingness to support U.S. lead efforts. U.S. forces using Sea Basing will deploy via strategic lift assets, and then assemble at the Sea Base. These forces will conduct collaborative planning enroute, so that they will be more rapidly available to execute missions once they arrive in theater. Upon arrival at the Sea Base, the forces will not be required to move their supplies ashore; they can remain afloat in relative safety, awaiting further guidance from the Combatant Commander or President. Once the President decides to commit forces, the flexibility of selective offload will allow the Joint Force Commander to send ashore only those forces required. These forces will be fully tailored to the mission task they are to perform. The assault forces will move directly from the Sea Base to the objective, free of the security requirement for their combat support and combat service support assets. Most of the maneuver force’s fire support will remain afloat,

enabling the force to maneuver under the umbrella of precision weapons and networked fire support provided by the Sea Strike capabilities of the joint force's Sea Base. The force's maneuverability will also be unencumbered by the need to create a large logistics base ashore, since the Sea Base is designed to provide the precision logistics support required. At-sea replenishment capability allows the force and Sea Base to remain on station for the duration of the mission. Sea Basing minimizes the times supplies have to be moved, providing a faster and more responsive supply chain.²² Once the mission has been completed, the force will move back to the Sea Base for reconstitution in preparation for the next mission.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE SEA BASING CONCEPT

The development of the Sea Basing concept is just one stop in the long road of Navy-Marine Corps operational concepts over the last twelve years. The period since 1990 has been perhaps the most productive period in development of strategic maritime doctrine since Mahan wrote his books on sea power in the early 1900s. There are several reasons for this, but passage of the Goldwater-Nichols Act (GNA) and the fall of the Soviet Union have contributed significantly to the doctrinal surge and the evolution of Sea Basing.

In the mid-1980's, the GNA was passed into law. A watershed event in national security legislation, GNA has had a direct impact on the development of doctrine and strategy. In broad terms, GNA mandated joint action among the services and the development of Joint Warfare. One of the unintended consequences of the law was that it forced the Navy and the Marine Corps to rethink their relations. Regardless of their prior inter-service relations, GNA clearly required the two maritime services to get in sync and cooperate more effectively.

Another important event for concept development occurred when the Soviet Union imploded in 1991. The loss of the U.S. Navy's only peer competitor profoundly impacted missions the Navy would need to accept--and where the Navy would be focused. The U.S. Navy no longer focused solely on the blue water mission of control of the seas as its primary reason for existing. It quickly became clear that the littoral regions of the world, with their high population density and volatile social problems, would become the sites in need of the attention of the naval services. This critical shift in focus was codified with publication of perhaps the most important of the naval concept plans, the document which provides the first step to Sea Basing, *From the Sea*.

...FROM THE SEA

The *From the Sea* strategy statement, published in 1992, provided the impetus that eventually led the naval services to the Sea Basing concept. Signed by both the Chief of Naval

Operations and the Commandant of the Marine Corps, *From the Sea* was the first of many documents unifying the two services. It clearly outlines the strategy shift from the blue water mission to the littorals. This shift then led to requirements to develop new technologies and to energize the collective thoughts of Navy-Marine Corps leadership for the next ten years. In order to support this new direction established in *From the Sea*, the Navy, for the first time, established a naval doctrine center in Newport, Rhode Island. *From the Sea* outlines the basic elements of the new littoral oriented core competencies of the Naval Services; it also specifies the capabilities that the eventual Sea Base would provide the Combatant Commander. *From the Sea* was one of the first advocates of using Naval Forces as enablers for the larger Joint Force. Additionally, *From the Sea* clearly asserts that naval forces should be expeditionary in nature and tailored for joint operations. *From the Sea* defines expeditionary as a “mind set, a culture, and a commitment to forces that are designed to operate forward and to respond swiftly.”²³ It also plants the seeds that will become the bed rock of the Sea Basing concept. *From the Sea* explains that Naval Expeditionary Forces will be “structured to build power from the sea and sustain support for long term operations.”²⁴ Moreover, it declares that these forces will be “unrestricted by the need for transit or over flight.”²⁵ Perhaps its two most visionary statements in regard to Sea Basing are: “Focusing on the littoral area, the Navy and Marine Corps can seize and defend an adversary’s port, naval base or coastal air base to allow the entry of heavy Army and Air Force forces.”²⁶ Then *From the Sea* goes on to predict that “Sea lift will provide the maritime bridge to ensure heavy joint forces can arrive and fight effectively in major crisis.”²⁷ *From the Sea* further notes that “Naval forces also contain crisis through forward operations and rapid response with flexible and sustainable sea based forces.”²⁸ In eight short, prophetic pages, the strategic intellect of the Navy and Marine Corps focus on the future. The document clearly asserts that maritime forces are inherently joint and provide the link to the heavy forces needed to win wars. *From the Sea* also anticipates the logistical challenges for sea based forces. On three occasions, it specifically describes sea-based forces’ flexibility, power projection, and force sustainment capabilities. Lastly, this seminal document specifies a critical element for a Joint Force Commander (JFC) to understand the Sea Basing capability: “If diplomatic activities resolve the crisis Naval Forces can withdraw without action or build up ashore.”²⁹ Therefore Sea Basing may foster diplomatic solutions and thus serve to deter future conflict.

FORWARD...FROM THE SEA

The next critical document, published in 1994, is the *Forward...From the Sea* strategy paper. Although, not as revolutionary as the *From the Sea* strategy, it maintains the momentum of the former document in the evolution of recent naval doctrine. It offers several assertions on the potential of Sea Basing. For the first time, Sea Basing is discussed as a separate concept, one that stands alone. *Forward...From the Sea* states “the most important role of naval forces in situations short of war is to be engaged in forward areas, with objectives of preventing conflict and controlling crisis.”³⁰ This forward presence allows naval forces to act before an adversary denies access. This suggestion that naval forces can not only kick in the door but can hold the door open for other military forces by diffusing crises before they become critical or anti access capabilities are engaged is a critical element of Sea Basing’s potential. *Forward...From the Sea* also provides two observations that have enabled Sea Basing to mature. First it notes that, “It is the worlds’ littorals where the Naval Services, operating from sea bases in international water, can influence events ashore in support of our interest.”³¹ Later, it provides the rationale for Sea Basing with “U.S. naval forces, operating from highly mobile ‘Sea Bases’ in forward areas, are therefore free of the political encumbrances that may inhibit and otherwise limit the scope of land-based operations in the forward theater.”³² Finally, *Forward...From the Sea* perceptively observes that the Sea Base may not be a single platform, but a combination of platforms that act as a unit for the whole of the joint force.³³

NAVAL POWER 21 AND MARINE CORPS STRATEGY 21

Naval Power 21 and *Marine Corps Strategy 21* set forth current Navy and Marine Corps strategic visions and are the next link in Sea Basing’s evolution. These documents emphasize what the maritime services provide to the JFC as part of the Joint Warfighting Team; they also bring Sea Basing to the forefront of maritime concepts.³⁴ The four fundamental strategic strengths of the Naval Services are; decisiveness, sustainability, responsiveness, and agility.³⁵ In order to accomplish these inherent strengths in the future, *Naval Power 21* states that “Sea Basing provides force protection, C4ISR, fires, and logistics capabilities that support versatile and flexible power projection, and enables highly lethal forces to move directly from ship to operational objectives deep inland.”³⁶ This assertion solidifies the Sea Basing concept as one of the cornerstones of future maritime and joint capabilities.

MARINE CORPS STRATEGY 21

In *Marine Corps Strategy 21* (MS 21), the Sea Basing concept is not specifically discussed, but the capabilities provided by Sea Basing are outlined in detail. MS 21 specifies

five signature characteristics, three of which directly indicate what the Sea Basing concept provides to the combatant commander: “Capable of a multitude of missions across the spectrum of conflict; Scalable to meet the Combatant Commander’s requirements; and enable joint, allied and coalition operations.”³⁷ MS 21 clarifies the roles that the Marine Corps Marine Air Ground Task Force (MAGTF) will play in power projection from the continental U.S. or a Sea Base. It emphasizes the role the Marines play as part of the larger Joint Force by providing “enhanced strategic response and operational reach to support and enable joint, allied, and coalition operations.”³⁸ In MS21, the MAGTF emerges as a fully integrated and critical element of the Sea Basing concept with the ability to provide power projection and a scaleable response for the JFC.

SEA POWER 21

In *Sea Power 21*, (October 2002) the Chief of Naval Operation (CNO) visualizes Sea basing as a separate concept and specifies what will be required to conduct Sea Basing in the future. *Sea Power 21* designates Sea Basing as part of the triad of naval concepts, which also include Sea Strike, (offensive capabilities) and Sea Shield, (defensive capabilities). This triad will be developed into the *Sea Power 21* capability set. *Sea Power 21* unifies the concepts of the last ten years into a single vision and describes the capabilities and requirements needed to achieve that vision. The CNO states that “future naval operations will use revolutionary information superiority and dispersed, networked force capabilities to deliver unprecedented offensive power, defensive assurance, and operational independence to Joint Force Commanders.”³⁹ These three core concepts are “enabled by the ForceNet, an overarching effort to integrate warriors, sensors, networks, command and control, platforms, and weapons into a fully netted, combat force.”⁴⁰ *Sea Power 21* asserts that Sea Basing will be the “Foundation from which offensive and defensive fires are projected-making Sea Strike and Sea Shield realities.”⁴¹ The goal of Sea Basing is to provide the JFC with “global command and control” and “accelerate expeditionary deployments and employment timelines by pre-positioning vital equipment and supplies in-theater.”⁴² The Sea Base will allow the U.S. military unparalleled speed of action and allow our forces to be in place before an adversary can fully engage his antiaccess capabilities. The “Sea Basing concept provides a valuable tool for prioritizing naval programs”⁴³ both in support of the naval services and in support of the JFC.

EXPEDITIONARY MANEUVER WARFARE

Recent development of naval concepts has been fueled by the Marine Corps’ revolutionary thinking and concept development. The Marine Corps’ publication of the “Ship to

Objective Maneuver” concept paper, transformed the oceans of the world into maneuver space to be used by any nation with the technical capability to exploit this unfriendly environment. This tactical and operational capability is linked to the strategic vision of *Marine Strategy 21*, through the capstone concept of Expeditionary Maneuver Warfare (EMW): “EMW is the union of Marine Corps core competencies; maneuver warfare philosophy; expeditionary heritage; and the concepts by which it organizes, deploys and employs forces.”⁴⁴ EMW calls for the Marine Corps to provide; “joint and multinational enabling, strategic agility, operational reach, tactical flexibility, and support and sustainment.”⁴⁵ The Marine Corps provides these capabilities to the JFC as an “integral component of a larger naval force”⁴⁶ from a secure Sea Base.

In EMW, the Sea Base is expected to provide “networked platforms and promote interoperability among the amphibious task force, carrier battle group, and maritime preposition forces,”⁴⁷ thus furthering the idea that the Sea Base is not a single platform, but a family of platforms. The Marine Corps expects the Sea Base to provide rapid force closure, worldwide logistics support and enhance the flow of follow on forces.⁴⁸ Sea Basing and the Marine Corps provide a bridge between advance force operations and the larger Joint Force needed to execute and win the land campaign. Lastly, the Sea Base provides for the rapid reconstitution of redeploying Marine forces for follow on missions.⁴⁹ EMW thus represents the full development of the Sea Basing concept in supporting the needs of the JFC. Sea Basing provides the capability to assure access and to sustain the advance force, the bridging force, and the campaign force. Finally, it prepares them to move on to the next contingency.

SEA BASING AS A TRANSFORMATIONAL CONCEPT

With the fall of the Soviet Union, the United States became the clear victor in the Cold War. The President, rather than allowing the U.S. military to rest on its laurels, directed the transformation of the military to a capabilities-based force, rather than a threat-based force, in his September 2002 National Security Strategy (NSS). The NSS declares that a “military structured to deter massive Cold War-era armies must be transformed to focus more on how an adversary might fight rather than when and where a war might occur.”⁵⁰ The Sea Basing concept provides the nation’s military the “ability to conduct rapid and precise operations to achieve decisive results”⁵¹ as called for by the President.

The Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff provided initial guidance for the transformation of the U.S. military with the *Joint Vision 2010* paper. *Joint Vision 2020* (JV 2020) builds upon the conceptual template established by Joint Vision 2010, to guide the transformation development of the armed forces.⁵² JV 2020 calls for full spectrum dominance through four pillars: dominant

maneuver, precision engagement, focused logistics, and full dimensional protections.⁵³ Sea Basing satisfies the tenants of dominant maneuver and focused logistics thru its inherent freedom of movement and self-supporting logistics capabilities.

The requirements for transformation, in the Department of Defense (DOD), are provided by two key documents; the *Quadrennial Defense Review Report* and the *Transformation Planning Guidance*. The characteristics of Sea Basing provide many of the desired capabilities required in this transformation planning. Acceptance of the Sea Basing concepts within the DOD moves the nation's military one step closer to the goals and objectives of transformation.

THE QUADRENNIAL DEFENSE REVIEW'S (QDR) CASE FOR SEA BASING

The transformational qualities of the Sea Basing concept match many of the capabilities desired in the Secretary of Defense (SecDef) QDR (September 2001). The QDR designates several transformational pillars, and Sea Basing may satisfy many of these requirements. First, Sea Basing supports the deployment not only of Naval Forces, but also of the special operation forces required to conduct the operational preparation of the battle space and the deployment of the follow-on war-winning forces, thereby supporting the pillar of "Strengthening joint operations through...improved joint command and control, joint training, and an expanded joint forces presence policy."⁵⁴ This pillar requires joint forces to be "scalable and task organized into modular units to allow the combatant commander to draw on the appropriate forces to deter or defeat and adversary."⁵⁵ Additionally, the QDR requires the forces to be "highly networked with joint command and control, and better able to integrate into combined operation,"⁵⁶ which the ENSeabasing Concept provides. The QDR specifies six transformational initiatives; Sea Base fulfills one directly and two indirectly. Initiative Three directs that transformation should provide the ability to "project and sustain U.S. Forces in distant antiaccess and area denial environments."⁵⁷ With its inherent mobility, speed of action and Sea Strike and Sea Shield capabilities, the Sea Base fulfills this initiative. ENSeabasing is also designed to "leverage information technology" and provide "high-capacity, interoperable communication systems that can rapidly transmit information over secure, jam-resistant data links to support joint forces."⁵⁸ ENSeabasing will also be better able to defend against Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) because of its ability to quickly disperse and mass its platforms, while protecting the force with the missile defense capability of Sea Shield. Added to its ability to assemble just over the horizon of an adversary, this allows it to "protect bases of operation at home and abroad and defeat the threat of CBRNE (chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear and high yield explosives) weapons."⁵⁹

SEA BASING SUPPORTS THE TRANSFORMATION PLANNING GUIDANCE (TPG)

Sea Basing meets the transformation goals set by the SecDef in the Transformation Planning Guidance (TPG) published in April 2003. ENSeabasing provides the following joint capabilities listed in the TPG:

- Superior Information Position
- High quality Shared awareness
- Dynamic Self coordination
- Dispersed Forces
- Demassed Forces
- Compressed Operations and level of War
- Rapid Speed of Command⁶⁰

To meet these requirements, ENSeabasing provides “secure support and sustainment of systems, platforms, and operating forces through the Combat Logistics Force (CLF) and selected platforms of the Maritime Preposition Force (MPF), other afloat propositioning ships, and new high speed air and surface craft.”⁶¹ Further, “The Sea Base expands and contracts to match mission requirements by incorporating the full range of Naval Forces”⁶² and the joint force. “In the far term, Sea Basing will provide an increased ability to protect, project, and support joint and multinational forces...and will become a single, fully netted force to enhance the speed and effectiveness of expeditionary warfare.”⁶³ In order to support the forces on the move self-synchronization, the Sea Base enabled by, “ForceNet will create an adaptable command and control network capability that will make naval platforms the location of choice from which future JFC's direct operations.”⁶⁴

WHAT SEA BASING PROVIDES THE JOINT FORCE COMMANDER (JFC)

The Sea Base provides the bridge between the operational preparations of the battle space, conducted by special operations forces, and the campaigning force. One of the stated goals of the maritime concepts is to “extend the persistence and staying power of our forward deployed naval forces, and facilitate as well the presence, staying power and operations of our fellow Services.”⁶⁵ ENSeabasing provides this capability. American forces can operate from submarines or amphibious ships that are able to quickly respond to a crisis. While the Sea Base grows to its full potential offshore, these advance forces develop the intelligence picture. The integrated, networked command and control capability of the ENSeabase allows the JFC to establish his headquarters afloat, including elements of his component headquarters. As the crisis escalates, the maritime force moves units ashore to secure the critical infrastructure that allows the campaign forces to arrive and go into combat. These forces are supported by the fire support assets which remain afloat on the ENSeabase. Just as with the World War II Mobile

Service Squadron Ten, whose duties were to “furnish similar logistic support to Navy and Marine shore-based units...as well as Army units which may be prescribed and it will furnish such services and supplies as any of our armed forces thereat may require,”⁶⁶ ENSeabasing will provide the JFC the logistical support needed to enable the advance and early arrival forces.

WHAT SEA BASING IS NOT

Sea Basing will not allow the United States to completely free itself of all overseas basing requirements. It will relieve much of the pressure on our overseas allies by allowing many U.S. forces to return home. The U.S. will still need preposition stocks of certain types of equipment in forward sites. The U.S. will also still need forward base access which provides air facilities where strategic lift aircraft can land and transfer U.S. forces to theater lift capabilities like the High Speed Vessel, which then transfer the force to the ENSeabase.

The ENSeabase will not provide the JFC all the required equipment to completely transition from the enabling force to the campaign force. Due to their size and bulk some items will still need to be staged in forward regions, such as bulk liquid equipment, engineer equipment, decontamination equipment, material handling equipment, mine warfare equipment, construction materials, and long-shelf-life medical stores. These hard-to-move items are needed by the heavier campaigning elements of the Joint Force to sustain the theater and go beyond the initial 30 days of supply provided by the brigade-sized sea based force. Much of this equipment has a dual use for humanitarian assistance, so it should be easier to achieve support for staging with foreign governments. In supporting the prepositioning and maintenance of U.S. equipment, the host government gains the U.S. as an ally while limiting the internal political risk.

Another issue with the Sea Basing concept is the development of the family of platforms and the supporting equipment to operate the base in the highest sea states. Currently a Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) requires three ships to deploy. The ENSeabase is envisioned to support a Marine Expeditionary Brigade, a force much larger than a MEU. It would potentially need an amphibious lift requirement of about twelve ships. Further, the logistic support provided by the Maritime Preposition Force (MPF) squadron adds five or six large ships to the total required. The aircraft carrier and surface combatants bring the total conventional shipping requirement to between 20 and 25 ships. These ships have limited networking capabilities and do not have the capability to transfer equipment in the high sea states. Few solutions to the incompatibility of the shipping have been discussed that do not involve new construction. The initial solution involved the linking together of several floating oil drilling platforms to form a Mobil

Offshore Base.⁶⁷ Another concept, presented in this SRP, is to use several networked multi-mission ships that combine the capabilities of the current twenty-five ship requirement into three or four ships.⁶⁸ This concept has the advantage of greater mobility with each ship having the ability to operate independently until need for the ENSeabase. Regardless, to make Sea Basing a reality, we need new platforms to allow for networked command and control, long range fire support, and the ready inspection and maintenance of equipment while at sea. Currently equipment on the MPF and amphibious ships is combat loaded, which does not allow for the level of maintenance required to reconstitute the force afloat.

SEA BASING IS THE FUTURE

This SRP describes the development of Sea Basing over the last 12 years. The capabilities Sea Basing will provide future JFC match those desired by the SecDef and President of the United States. Unfortunately, current technology has not caught up with the capabilities envisioned in the concept. We must continue to develop such technologies like those that would facilitate transfers of equipment in high sea states and afloat reconstitution capabilities because of their potential military advantage in Sea Basing. Sea Basing will not be the only capability required by the nation; it will not completely free the U.S. from the need for overseas base access. But it will reduce the nation's dependence on overseas bases and allow the JFC a flexible and agile capability to hold enemies in abeyance until the heavy campaign winning forces arrive on the scene. Once the full potential of the Sea Base is reached, U.S. military forces will be able to move faster than any potential adversary can react. The deterrent effect this will have on the nation's enemies will save the lives of America citizens and service members in future conflicts. The capabilities of Sea Basing as a corner stone joint concept will also ensure the dominance of American military power until space technologies overcome its capabilities to project power abroad. Sea Basing is perhaps the most important naval and joint military concept of this uncertain era in which we live.

WORD COUNT=6,116

ENDNOTES

¹ Donald H. Rumsfeld, *Quadrennial Defense Review Report* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Defense, September 30, 2001), 2.

² *Ibid.*, 20.

³ *Ibid.*, 21.

⁴ Donald H. Rumsfeld, Transformation Planning Guidance (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Defense, April 2003), 1.

⁵ Worrall Reed Carter, RADM, USN, Beans, Bullets, and Black Oil (Washington, D.C., 1951), viii.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 90.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 1.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 10.

¹¹ Vern Clark, ADM, USN. "Sea Power 21, Projecting Decisive Joint Capabilities," *Proceedings*, October 2002, 36.

¹² *Ibid.*, 34.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 36.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 37.

¹⁵ Charles W. Moore Jr., VADM, USN and Edward Hanlon Jr., LtGen, USMC. "Sea Basing, Operational Independence for a New Century," *Proceedings*, January 2003, 81.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 80.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 82.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Edward Hanlon Jr., LtGen, USMC and R.A. Route, RADM, USN, *Enhanced Networked Seabasing, 26 August 2003*. Navy/Marine Corps Concept Paper. (Quantico VA., and Newport RI.: U.S. Department of the Navy, 2003), 2.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*, 3.

²² Moore and Hanlon, 82.

²³ Sean O'Keefe, Frank B. Kelso II, ADM, USN and Carl E. Mundy, Jr., Gen, USMC, *From the Sea, September 1992*, Navy / Marine Corps Strategy Statement. (Washington D.C.: U.S. Department of the Navy, 1992), 2.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid., 3.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ John H. Dalton, J.M. Boorda, ADM, USN and Carl E. Mundy, Jr., Gen, USMC, *Forward...From the Sea, September 1994*. Navy / Marine Corps Strategy Statement. (Washington D.C.: U.S. Department of the Navy, 1994), 1.

³¹ Ibid., 2.

³² Ibid., 5.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Gordon England, Vern Clark, ADM, USN and James L. Jones, Gen, USMC, *Naval Power 21...A Naval Vision, October 2002*. Navy / Marine Corps Vision Statement. (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Navy, 2002), 1.

³⁵ Ibid., 2.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ James L. Jones, Gen, USMC, *Marine Corps Strategy 21* (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Navy, Headquarters U.S. Marine Corps, 3 November 2000), 2.

³⁸ Ibid., 7.

³⁹ Vern Clark, ADM, USN. "Sea Power 21, Projecting Decisive Joint Capabilities," *Proceedings*, October 2002, 33.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 34.

⁴¹ Ibid., 36.

⁴² Ibid., 37.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ James L. Jones, *Expeditionary Maneuver Warfare*, Marine Corps capstone concept paper. (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Navy, Headquarter, U.S. Marine Corps, 10 November 2001), cover letter.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 6.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 4.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ George W. Bush, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, D.C.: The White House, September 2002), 29

⁵¹ Ibid., 16.

⁵² Henry H. Shelton, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Vision 2020*, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government printing Office, June 2000), 1.

⁵³ Ibid., 2.

⁵⁴ Donald H. Rumsfeld, *Quadrennial Defense Review Report*, 32.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 43.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 45.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 42.

⁶⁰ Donald H. Rumsfeld, *Transformation Planning Guidance*, 31-32.

⁶¹ Vern Clark, ADM USN and Michael W. Hagee, Gen USMC, *Naval Operating Concept for Joint Operations*, (Washington D.C.: U.S. Department of the Navy, 2003), 11.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid., 16.

⁶⁴ U.S. Department of the Navy, *Sea Basing Concept of Operations (Draft)*. (Washington D.C. 25 March 2003), 23.

⁶⁵ Gordon England, *Naval Power 21*, 3.

⁶⁶ Carter, 95.

⁶⁷ The idea of using a Mobile Off-Shore Base (MOB) was first discussed by the Commandant of the Marine Corps in the early 90's. This concept uses structures built with off-shore oil platform technology. To create a MOB several of the huge platforms are linked into a facility large enough to land C-130 transport aircraft. The MOB would be able to move as separate pieces and assembly off the coast of an adversary. Only a few MOB's would be built due to the huge cost and each was envisioned as a national asset. Although technologically feasible, uncertainty remains about the MOB's ability to operate in the higher sea states and the ability of the platforms to link together. The concept remains valid and U.S. Joint Forces Command produced a concept paper *Joint Sea Basing* (Draft) 9/4/2003 which presents a MOB-centric view of Sea Basing.

⁶⁸ Jon R. Olson, LCDR, USN, "An Alternative Vision of Sea Power 21," *Proceedings*, October 2003. This article discusses the potential of using three ships to conduct the four tenants of Sea Power 21. One of the ships would be about the size of a current nuclear aircraft carrier using unmanned combat aircraft (UCAV) and provide the home for the embarked landing force. The second ship would be similar to the Littoral Combat Ship and provide the force with fire support, air defense, and command and control. The third ship would be a submarine like platform that could penetrate the enemies antiaccess capabilities, strike targets and insert Special Forces.

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